

Magazine Feature Section

HE'S THE PROUDEST ANIMAL IN ALL THE WIDE WORLD Uhlen 1:58, Owned By C. K. G. Billings, Whose Days On The Track Are Now Over Has Trotted More Record Miles Than Any Horse That Ever Lived.

Around the winding bend that enters on the many bridge paths in Central Park, New York, he dashes every morning in early spring and fall. His coat is shining ebony; his proud head is held high; and his gait is that of the thoroughbred with his paws coming up and down with machine-like precision.

If you are an inhabitant of the American metropolis you have probably seen him, carrying his master. And you have undoubtedly marvelled at his graceful form and actions and questioned who the stocky man astride him might be.

And well you might, for this ebony-black marvel is Uhlan, 1:58, by Bingen, 2:06 1/4, out of Blonde by Sir Walter, Jr., the greatest trotter that ever lived—and his master—the man who rides him is C. K. G. Billings, New York, multi-millionaire, one of the most famous lovers of fast horses in the world who has driven more than 114 world's records.

But Uhlan's days on the track are over. The 11-year-old black gelding who has trotted more fast miles in record time than any other horse ever did, is retired and Mr. Billings now uses him only as a saddle-horse while in New York during the remainder of the year, the son of Bingen lives the life of peace on his master's vast country estate, Curl's Neck farm on the celebrated James river, among the hills and valleys of old Virginia. Here he lives over and dreams, (if horses do dream) of his many conquests on the turf and enjoys life as few human beings do.

Although this story deals with Uhlan, in the main, a word or two about Mr. Billings would not be amiss. Born in Chicago, his father was himself a famous horseman, who owned the one-time world's champion mare, Princess, dam of Happy Medium. So the love of horses, especially the record-breaking kind was born into C. K. G.

When he was a young man, working in the gas works of which his father was president, the first yearnings for a trotting horse came to him and he looked around the Windy City for the best he could obtain. He was lucky enough to stumble upon an especially promising mare, the price for whom was \$2,500, slightly above the young Billings' bank balance, so he went to his mother who made up the difference.

When the elder Billings first saw the horse he said to C. K. G.: "Son, what did you pay for her?" "Just \$600, father," came the answer.

"That is too much money for you to invest in a horse and I will take her off your hands at that price," which the elder Billings proceeded to do, much to the discomfiture of his son.

That was Mr. Billings' initial venture in the racing game, but since that time, he has invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in equine flesh. He owns such horses as Uhlan, 1:58; Lou Dillon, 1:58 1/4; the trotting queen, The Harvester, 2:01; Charley Mac, with whom he established the amateur saddle record of 2:14 1/4; and formerly owned Major Delmar, 1:59 1/4.

But back to Uhlan, the black gelding, the greatest trotter of history. The son of Bingen is now eleven years old. He was bred by Arthur H. Parker, well-known horseman of Bedford, Mass., who sold him when quite young to Charles Sanders of Salem. After the black beauty had reduced his mark to 2:02 1/4, Mr. Billings purchased him from Sanders at the 1905 Columbus meeting of the Grand Circuit. The price was \$35,000 one of the largest sums ever expended for a trotter.

The gelding was then placed under the care of Charles (Doc) Tanner, Mr. Billings' trainer, for the remainder of the 1909 campaign. On July 9, 1910, Mr. Billings drove Uhlan to his first record over the North Randall mile track near Cleveland. This was the son of Bingen's first real attempt after being purchased by Mr. Billings, and he was hitched to wagon, negotiating the distance in 2:02 1/4. He was unplaced.

On August 8, of the same year, the ebony beauty reduced this mark by a minute and three-quarters, over the same track with Mr. Billings up. This also was made to wagon, the quarters being teed off in 30 1/4, 29 1/4, 30 1/4, 30 1/4 seconds respectively. At that time, this mark was the world's record for a trotting geld-

ing, made either to sulky or wagon, the previous record being established in 1904 at Memphis by Major Delmar who was hitched to sulky and went in 2:01 1/4.

And then the son of Bingen and Blonde further exhibited to the sporting public on August 12, four days later, at the North Randall Grand Circuit meeting. Uhlan was brought up to establish the world's record in harness or sulky and driven by "Doc" Tanner he went a mile in the sensational time of 1:58 3/4, breaking all trotting marks, but one and that one was established by aid of a windshield, when Lou Dillon went in 1:58 1/4 over the Memphis track in 1903, but she followed a runner to whose sulky was attached a canvas screen to break the wind.

Uhlan's next effort to lower records failed, but only on account of unfavorable weather conditions. The ebony marvel was started at the Hartford meeting of the Grand Circuit over Charter Oak Park, where Mr. Billings drove him to beat his wagon record of 2:01, but Uhlan failed to equal it by a quarter of a second, the time being 2:01 1/4. The day was not favorable, there being a high wind which retarded him.

And yet old horsemen who saw this effort claim that with track and weather considered, it was a better mile than the North Randall record, as the fractional time, 20 1/4, 1:01 1/4, 1:32 1/4, and 2:01 1/4 showed that he went the last quarter in 29 seconds, a remarkable performance.

Old horsemen will tell you that "A horse without a heart ain't no good," this reference, of course, not being meant literally, but as a synonym for stamina and grit. And the possession of "a heart" is one of Uhlan's greatest assets, for there never was a horse bred or raised who has more grit than Bingen's son. This was illustrated at the Goshen half-mile track in New York state when the black beauty went for a world's record over the two-lapped track in 2:02 1/4 with Doc Tanner up.

He got away from the starting post in good shape, but at the quarter pole he stumbled and fell to his knees. Fearing some injury to the great trotter, the audience rose and let forth one long gasp and sigh. But what was their amazement when they saw the beauty pick himself up, stagger for two steps, then jog for a few more, held back by Tanner—and then break into a fierce trot that nearly wrenched Tanner's arms from the sockets. Speaking of the performance after the race, the driver said:

"I sure thought Uhlan was a goner when he stumbled there and after he picked himself up, I just held him to a jog, not caring anything about the record. But he seemed to want to go, so I let him. Thinking maybe we might get in under 2:10, but I never thought we'd get that record."

The season of 1911 was Uhlan's greatest and that summer saw more trotting records broken than any previous year. And they were all smashed by the marvelous son of Bingen.

At the North Randall Grand Circuit meeting, Mr. Billings drove his pride to a world's record to wagon, going a mile in two minutes flat, equalling the mark which Mr. Billings had set over the Glenville track at Cleveland in 1903, with Lou Dillon, but the trotting queen was

aided by a windshield when she made her attempt.

Mr. Billings also drove Uhlan to another record at the same meeting three days later, when the black wizard went a half-mile to wagon in 56 1/4 seconds. This trial was made before the erection of the inner half-mile track at the Cleveland fair grounds and Uhlan started from the half-mile post to the wire in order that the finish might be made in front of the grand stand.

The next year marked Uhlan's greatest performance, the lowering of his mark to 1:58 and the setting of the team record at 2:03 1/4. Both these were made at the meeting of the Kentucky Trotting Horse Breeders' Association at Lexington and Doc Tanner handled the reins both times.

On October 8, what is heralded as the greatest performance in the annals of American turf took place, the setting of the world's record for trotting horses regardless of sex. According to Tanner, there wasn't much to the race.

"I just let the black baby go and he went that 'sally'."

But the thousands of spectators who witnessed the race will never forget it. As the ebony coated gelding swung into the stretch before the grandstand, they just stood and gaped, with eyes wide open. They tried to cheer the horse on—but they couldn't—they found they had lost the use of their vocal organs.

When the figures "1:58" were hung on the announcing board, there followed a silence—a silence that must have approached the one which came after Lincoln's speech at Gettysburg. And then the stands broke out in cheering. Spectators filled the track and tried to shake the hands of Mr. Billings and Doc Tanner.

Three days later, hitched to the pole with Lewis Forrest, 2:06 1/4, another of Mr. Billings' many trotters, Uhlan set the world's record for teams, going the mile in 2:03 1/4. The pair was scheduled to beat 2:07 1/4, the previous mark.

And thus ended the public career of the greatest trotting horse that ever lived.

The thought may enter your minds that with his great string of trotters, Mr. Billings must have made a fortune from their winnings, but such is not the fact for C. K. G. is a true sportsman. His horses have never raced in a purse or stake race. Horses are his hobby and they cost him thousands of dollars yearly and yield him no monetary return.

The trophy room at Curl's Neck farm is filled with many trophies, for that is the only reward Mr. Billings will accept. It is said he has more cups and trophies than he can count, but if you should ever have the good fortune to be a guest at the farm in the winding hills of Virginia, and should ask the little old man what "such-and-such" a cup was given for, the chances are ten to one that he can answer your question in full.

And if you should ever happen to be about Central Park and catch a glimpse of a big black gelding, with a little man with a drooping mustache astride him, gather your breath and yell at the top of your voice the one word—"Go!"—in the manner of starting Judge Frank Walker—and watch the feet of that black gelding pound the ground in perfect unison.

Chance With the Spit Ball

There are no end of explanations of the famous "spit ball," and they are all wrong.

The "spit ball," as everybody interested in baseball knows, has been the delight of pitchers and the despair of batters ever since it was introduced, about ten years ago. In throwing the "spit ball" the pitcher first moistens a portion of its surface with saliva. The ball is given such a direction that if the bat does meet it the blow will fall on the moistened part, and this results in its traveling only a short distance. But, as many batters can testify, the "spit ball" takes such an erratic course that it is extremely hard to hit.

The reason the "spit ball" is so hard to bat is because it has no real constant cause for its behavior. It

is thrown in such a way as to be freed from all the controlling elements which determine the "in," the "out" and "drop" curves.

From the time it leaves the pitcher's hand to its arrival within range of the bat it is left to the laws of chance. The batter must not merely outguess the pitcher—he must outguess the laws of chance, just as in a roulette game.

Theoretically, a "spit ball" should not move a hair's breadth to the right or left. Theoretically, also, a pointed stick placed carefully on its point should not fall down, because there is no visible reason why it should fall one way rather than the other.

It does promptly begin to fall because there are a thousand invisible reasons. Little vibrations of the air or the floor it stands on are enough to throw it out of equilibrium, and

down it goes. So with the "spit ball," the air, instead of dividing equally to the right and left, favors first one side and then the other, also it tries to get under and then over the ball.

When the air dodges to the left it creates a pressure on the left side which crowds the ball toward the right. Just as the sphere begins to veer to the right the air is likely to shift over to the other side and make the ball skid to the left.

Aeroplane drivers have made it clear how uncertain the density of the air proves to be. Besides the occasional big "air-pockets" which are liable to send them plunging to the ground, little "holes" and eddies keep tugging at the wings. The airman must offset these differences by endless warping of his planes and rudders.

These variations of the air make the "spit ball" jump about in its own irregular fashion. Even water has similar irregular action on a moving body. A marble or a shot dropped into a tank ought to proceed by a straight line directly to the bottom. As a matter of fact, the only sure thing about its course is that it will follow a straight line.

The curved ball is thrown with a spin or twist. If the spin is one which makes the front surface move from left to right, it results in forcing the dividing air to keep up on the right side. This causes a constant air pressure on the right and a constant partial vacuum on the left. The result of this unequal pressure forces the ball to the left.

If these were the only forces caused by the spinning ball, curves would result exactly opposite to that which actually does occur. In reality, the matter of friction more than offsets these forces. On one side of the ball the surface is travelling with the passing air current and helps to get out of the way; on the other side it opposes and interferes with its passage.

For this reason there is always more air pressure on the left side of a ball whose front is turning from left to right than on the other side. Therefore the ball actually curves to the right and not to the left, in spite of the forces first mentioned.

Irregular variations in the air have a slight effect on a curved ball, but the spinning motion, if strong, will be the main and constant cause

for its deviating from a straight course.

The old smooth-bore guns shot a round leaden ball which behaved exactly like a baseball. It was made of lead because the necessary weight could be obtained in small compass. This gave the air less chance to grip it and resulted in the bullet carrying farther.

The small bulk had a still more important result than carrying power. It allowed the air less chance to pull the bullet out of its course. Had the bullet been a perfect fit in these old guns and had it left the muzzle without any twist, it would have acted like a "spitball," and our forefathers would have had a hard time of it with the Indians and the bears.

As a matter of fact, the old "shot" ing iron" had a habit of "pitching a curve," so to speak, and fortunately it was always the same one. Some used "outs" and some "ins," and there were combinations of "ins" and "drops" and various twisters, but never a "spit ball."

It was necessary, of course, to get used to one's gun and allow for the curve.

When a charge of shot is fired from a shotgun the pellets leave the

muzzle with all kinds of curves. This is the reason that shotguns make such erratic "patterns" when fired at white paper.

The rifle was devised to prevent all curves by giving the projectile a twist on the horizontal plane. This twist or "under-spin," as it is called, has no deviating field because it is perpendicular to the direction of the bullet and therefore does not cause friction on either side. While the under-spin has no guiding effect on the projectile, it is able to prevent any other twist, appearing which might deviate the bullet. It is impossible to revolve anything on more than one axis at a time.

The long, thin shape of a rifle bullet gives the accidental air variations small chance to throw it out of line. A steady wind blowing across a rifle range must always be allowed for, or the bullet will strike on the lee side of the point it is aimed at.

A round object, whether baseball or bullet, cannot be thrown or shot accurately unless it is given a curve. An elongated projectile, like a rifle bullet, must have a twist perpendicular to the line of flight to keep it true to its course.



C.K.G. BILLINGS
DRIVING UHLAN TO
WAGON—HALF MILE
56 1/4



DOC. TANNER TELLING
MR. BILLINGS HOW 'T WAS DONE